

REGIONAL VOTING CENTER CONSULTING GROUP
Recommendations to the Metropolitan King County Council
July 27, 2007

Recommendations	3
Criteria	4
Vote-by-Mail Transition Report Criteria: Regional Voting Centers	4
Vote-by-Mail Transition Report Criteria: Ballot Drop-Off Locations	4
Regional Voting Center Consulting Group Additional Criteria	4
Regional Voting Center Recommendation	5
Regional Voting Center Estimated Costs	5
Ballot Drop-Off Location Recommendation	6
Ballot Drop-Off Location Security	6
Ballot Drop-Off Location Estimated Costs	7
Additional Recommendation	7
Appendices	9

In April 2007 the King County Council passed Motion 2007-0129 creating a Consulting Group to recommend to the Council the number and locations for Regional Voting Centers (RVCs) and Ballot Drop-Off Locations (BDOLs) as part of King County's transition to vote by mail (VBM).¹ The recommendations were to be delivered no later than July 27, 2007. This report is the result of the Regional Voting Center Consulting Group's (RVC CG's) work.

The Consulting Group was chaired by the Director of the Records, Elections and Licensing Services (REALS) Division and sought the advice and feedback of the King County Elections Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) in accordance with RCW 29A.46.260. The Consulting Group was composed of representatives from each of the following groups:

King County Elections

Ms. Sherril Huff, Director REALS (Chair)
Mr. Bill Huennekens, Vote by Mail Transition Manager

Citizen Elections Oversight Committee (CEOC)

Ms. Emily Willoughby, King County Democratic Party Representative
Ms. Monica Tracey, King County Republican Party Representative

Metropolitan King County Council Staff

Mr. Jeff McMorris, staff to Council Member Kathy Lambert
Mr. Larry Evans, staff to Council Member Larry Gossett

King County Disability Advisory Committee

Ms. Anita Koyier-Mwamba, Disability Rights Washington

Voting Rights Act Section 203 Community Coalition

Ms. Nadine Shiroma

Technical support to the RVC CG was provided by King County Elections' staff Courtney Caswell, Functional Analyst, and Alex Herzog, Administrative Specialist. Consulting Group meetings were facilitated by Mr. Harold Robertson, Waldron & Co.

¹ For full text of Motion 2007-01292, please refer to Section 2 in appendix.

Recommendations

The Regional Voting Center Consulting Group (RVC CG) recommends that King County establish 17 Regional Voting Centers (RVC) – four to be open for 20 days leading up to and including Election Day, and the remaining 13 to be open for approximately 5 days leading up to and including Election Day – along with 36 Ballot Drop-Off Locations (BDOLs) when the county transitions to all mail voting.

The paramount goal of Regional Voting Centers is to provide each voter with a disability the opportunity to cast an independent and secret ballot. Furthermore, state and federal laws provide guidance for offering Accessible Voting Units (AVUs) to voters with disabilities. An additional goal is to provide assistance and translated materials to members of the minority language community as specified by Section 203 of the Federal Voting Rights Act. Ballot Drop-Off Locations will provide any voter an opportunity to deposit their ballot into a secure, King County-sanctioned receptacle without the cost of postage.

In determining proposed locations for BDOLs and RVCs, the Regional Voting Center Consulting Group reviewed criteria in the Vote-by-Mail Transition Plan, identified additional considerations, drew upon transportation and population data, examined the experiences of other jurisdictions, and sought expert local knowledge. The RVC CG focused on identifying Regional Voting Centers near public transportation hubs because transportation is often the principal barrier to people with disabilities.² Representatives from King County Metro and ACCESS Transportation presented information to the RVC CG, detailing major transit hubs and explaining ACCESS van routes and operations.

The RVC CG also examined data from the Department of Services for the Blind regarding the geographic breakdown of their clientele by city.³ Large populations of persons who are blind live near the proposed transit hubs and RVC locations. Additional RVCs were identified to accommodate large communities of persons who are blind who do not live near the transit hubs.

In determining the number of Regional Voting Centers, the RVC CG considered estimated voter turnout and the number of accessible voting unit hours needed⁴. Figures were derived from other jurisdictions around the country and previous experience in King County⁵. To serve the voters in King County, 17 total RVCs are proposed.

Many options were explored for Ballot Drop-Off Locations. The RVC CG recommends that King County Library System (KCLS) facilities be used because many cities have KCLS facilities already in place. The libraries are well known to the communities and provide easy messaging to voters regarding locations of BDOLs outside the City of Seattle. In the City of Seattle, six Neighborhood Service Center “payment centers” are recommended for BDOLs. These facilities also are well known to the public and would again provide for easy messaging to voters.

² For map of transportation hubs, please refer to Section 6 in appendix.

³ For Department of Services for the Blind clientele and Census data regarding persons with disabilities, please refer to Section 4 and 5 in appendix.

⁴ For information regarding estimated voter turnout and Accessible Voting Unit use, please refer to Section 3 in appendix.

⁵ For information regarding jurisdictions from around the country, please refer to Section 8 and 9 in appendix.

Criteria

The February 2007 Vote-by-Mail (VBM) Transition Report put forth criteria for the selection of RVC facilities and BDOLs. In addition, RVC CG members identified additional criteria consistent with interests that they were assigned to represent.

Vote-by-Mail Transition Report Criteria: Regional Voting Centers

- Locations in close proximity to bus lines with regular and accessible service
- Serve voters equally with regard to voter population density and geographic dispersion⁶
- Interior environment of RVC conducive to voting and relatively distraction free
- Availability of sufficient square footage designated solely for Elections' use
- Government owned/controlled space preferred
- Available for lease for approximately 25 consecutive days, at least six times per year prior to elections conducted in February, March, April, May, August, and November
- Able to secure equipment and ballots in method consistent with King County Elections Security Plan
- Secured connectivity to voter registration database and Elections command center

Vote-by-Mail Transition Report Criteria: Ballot Drop-Off Locations

- Physical ballot drop box to follow strict guidelines as outlined in WAC 434-250-100, RCW 29A.48.040, and WAC 434-250-320⁷
- Consider traffic flows and public access to BDOL via public and private transit
- Relative security of the location, factors to be considered include:
 - Lighting
 - Open areas with high visibility
 - Ability to place drop box in an area that is not isolated
 - Security advantages gained from existing measures, for example video monitoring or security personnel presence
- Relative cost of permanently placing the ballot drop box
- Strive for maximum efficiency in regard to initial and ongoing BDOL operational costs
- Daily retrieval of ballots from each BDOL beginning 18 days prior to and including Election Day

Regional Voting Center Consulting Group Additional Criteria

- Consider the full gamut of potential barriers to accessible voting (disability, language, culture, education, etc.)
- County-wide equal access to RVCs and BDOLs
- Reach out to entire King County community with special regard to voters with disabilities
- Provide quality Chinese language assistance and post all elections signage in Chinese
- Focus on transparency, accuracy and accountability in RVC and BDOL operations and earn trust from voters during seamless VBM transition
- Train poll workers to assist RVC voters with respect and sensitivity
- Consider age as part of county demography
- Maintain flexibility in regard to number, location and type of RVCs and BDOLs in the future. It is expected that experience will modify the pattern of RVCs and BDOLs over time

⁶ For map of King County voter density, please refer to Section 7 in appendix.

⁷ For full text of regulations, please refer to Section 10 in appendix.

Regional Voting Center Recommendation

The RVC Consulting Group recommends 17 RVC facilities in a two-tiered system comprised of four RVC facilities to be open for 20 days prior to and including Election Day, and 13 RVC facilities to be open for approximately five days leading up to and including Election Day. This system is designed to serve an estimated maximum turnout at RVCs in the 2008 Presidential Election.

The following geographical areas are recommended as RVC locations:

Twenty-Day RVC Sites	Five-Day RVC Sites	
Renton (KCE facility), 919 SW Grady Way	Center Park Recreation Center, 2121 26th Ave S, Seattle	UW/Seattle Campus
Downtown Seattle (Ride Free Area) ⁸	Kirkland	Woodinville
Shoreline (Senior Center), 18560 1st NE. Seattle	Kent	Vashon
Bellevue (City Hall), 450 110th Ave	Federal Way	Issaquah
	Snoqualmie	Redmond
	Maple Valley	West Seattle
	Burien	

Regional Voting Center Estimated Costs

King County Elections staff estimated costs for RVC operations to include personnel, facilities management, equipment, security, and networking expenditures. The total capital and operating cost for a 20-day RVC facility is \$81,776 and a five-day facility is \$37,701.⁹ The total expenditure for the recommended system in a Presidential Election is as follows:

Twenty-Day Facilities—Cost per RVC	
Number of 20-day Facilities	4
One Time Costs	\$26,808
Operating Cost per Election	\$54,968
Cost per 20-Day RVC	\$81,776
Total 20-day RVC Expenditure	\$327,104

⁸ The RVC Consulting Group discussed, but did not reach consensus on recommending two RVCs in Downtown Seattle. The option discussed was a 20-day RVC and a five-day RVC, one of which would be located in the North end of the Metro Bus Ride Free zone and one of which would be located in the South end of the Ride Free zone.

⁹ For full analysis of RVC potential costs, please refer to Section 14 and 15 in appendix.

Five-Day Facilities—Cost per RVC	
Number of Five-Day Facilities	13
One Time Costs	\$17,068
Operating Cost per Election	\$20,633
Cost per five-Day RVC	\$37,701
Total Five-day RVC Expenditure	\$490,113

Total RVC Expenditures	
20-day Facilities	\$327,104
5-day Facilities	\$490,113
Total RVC Expenditures	\$817,217

Total RVC expenditures of \$817,217 are roughly comparable to the \$623,236 expended for polling place rent (\$70,680) and poll worker pay (\$552,556) in the 2006 General Election.

Ballot Drop-Off Location Recommendation

King County will offer BDOLs to provide voters the option to submit their voted ballots without postage. Ballot drop boxes would be open and available for ballot deposits 18 days up to and including Election Day. Outdoor, permanent, unmanned ballot drop boxes are preferred by the Regional Voting Center Consulting Group for greater accessibility, more flexible hours of operation and potentially more manageable leasing agreements with the recommended host facilities.¹⁰

The RVC CG has split the recommendation on BDOLs into two geographic segments, inside and outside the City of Seattle. In Seattle, the RVC CG recommends placing BDOLs at six Neighborhood Service Centers, specifically payment centers. Outside of Seattle, 30 BDOLs hosted by the King County Library System and the City of Enumclaw Public Library are recommended. Both types of locations, libraries and Neighborhood Service Centers, are well-known to voters, accessible, secure and available for use as BDOLs.

Ballot Drop-Off Location Security

Security of outdoor boxes, and more importantly, their contents, is paramount. Outdoor ballot drop boxes should be placed in well lit, high-traffic areas and clearly labeled as ballot drop boxes. Additionally, the RVC CG understands that warnings of federal criminal prosecution would be posted on all ballot drop boxes, to deter tampering with ballot drop boxes. If needed, other security devices, such as video monitoring and lighting would be implemented by King County Elections on a case-by-case basis.

Seattle Ballot Drop-Off Locations	
<i>Neighborhood Service Centers</i>	
Lake City	Ballard
Delridge	Southeast
Central	Northeast

¹⁰ For information regarding research of ballot drop boxes, please refer to Section 11 and 12 in appendix

Outside of Seattle Ballot Drop-Off Locations	
King County Library System	
Algona Pacific Library (<i>Pacific</i>)	Lake Forest Park Library (<i>Lake Forest Park</i>)
Auburn Library (<i>Auburn</i>)	Library Connection @ Crossroads
Black Diamond Library (<i>Black Diamond</i>)	Mercer Island Library (<i>Mercer Island</i>)
Boulevard Park Library (<i>Seattle</i>)	Muckleshoot Library (<i>Auburn</i>)
Carnation Library (<i>Carnation</i>)	Newport Way Library (<i>Bellevue</i>)
Covington Library (<i>Covington</i>)	North Bend Library (<i>North Bend</i>)
Des Moines Library (<i>Des Moines</i>)	Richmond Beach Library (<i>Shoreline</i>)
Duvall Library (<i>Duvall</i>)	Sammamish Library (<i>Sammamish</i>)
Fairwood Library (<i>Renton</i>)	Skykomish Library (<i>Skykomish</i>)
Fall City Library (<i>Fall City</i>)	Skyway Library (<i>Seattle</i>)
Federal Way Regional Library (<i>Fed. Way</i>)	Valley View Library (<i>SeaTac</i>)
Foster Library (<i>Tukwila</i>)	White Center Library (<i>Seattle</i>)
Issaquah Library (<i>Issaquah</i>)	Woodinville Library (<i>Woodinville</i>)
Kenmore Library (<i>Kenmore</i>)	Woodmont Library (<i>Des Moines</i>)
Kingsgate Library (<i>Kirkland</i>)	
City Library	
Enumclaw Public Library (<i>Enumclaw</i>)	

Ballot Drop-Off Location Estimated Costs

King County Elections estimated costs for BDOL operations to include personnel, facilities management, preferred ballot drop box hardware, and installation expenditures. The total capital and operating cost for an un-staffed, permanent ballot drop box is \$4,728.¹¹ The total expenditure for the recommended system in a Presidential Election, for 36 total ballot drop boxes, is as follows:

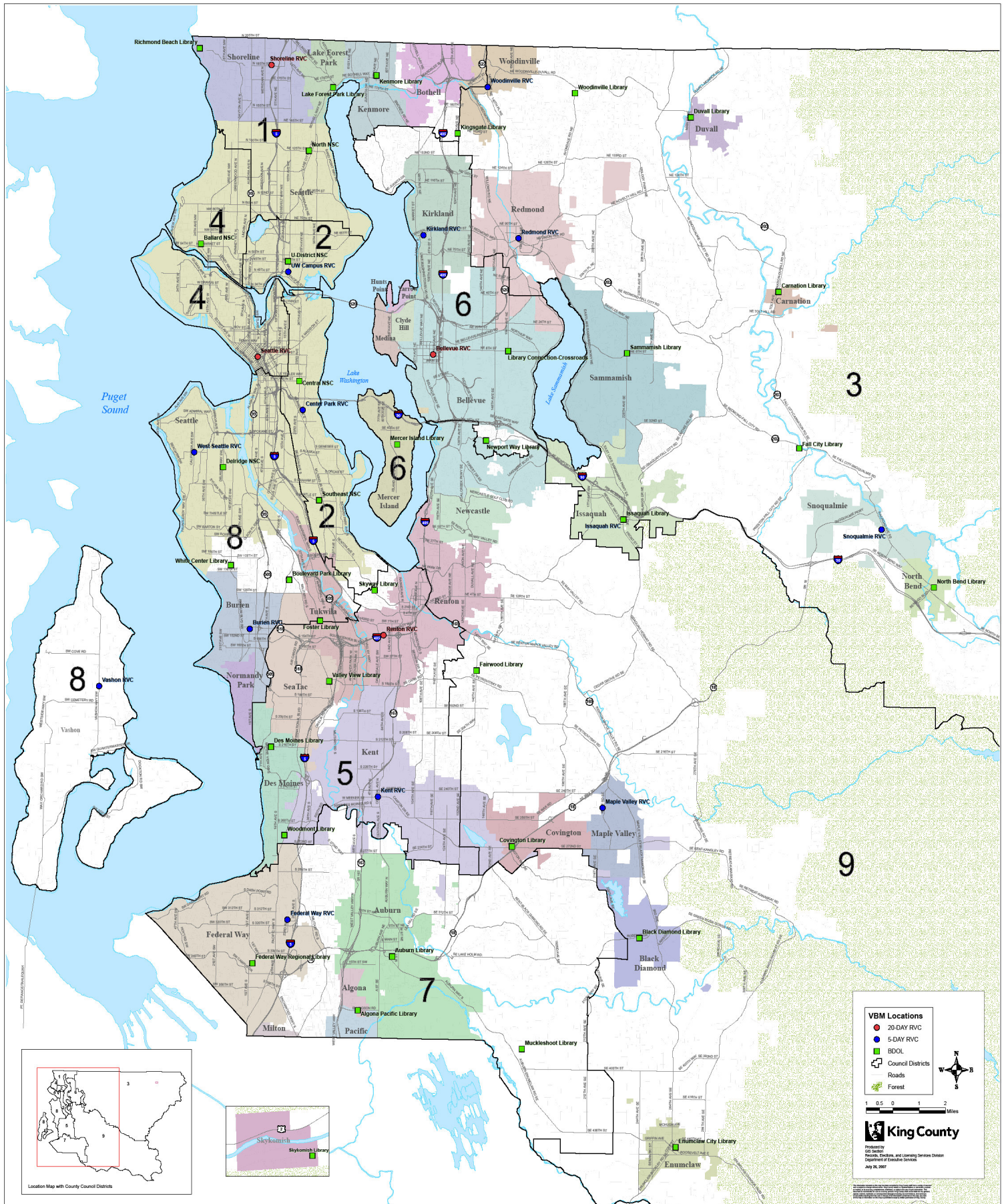
Ballot Drop Boxes: Permanent, un-staffed	
36 ballot drop boxes	\$39,600
On-going Costs (Ballot Retrieval Staff)	\$15,902
One-time costs (Installation Staff and installation hardware)	\$57,600
Total Expenditure	\$113,102

Additional Recommendation

In order to ensure flexibility and improve operations of Regional Voting Centers and Ballot Drop-Off Locations, the Regional Voting Center Consulting Group recommends that King County Elections continue to work with and consult the Disability Advisory Committee and the Section 203 Community Coalition on issues concerning RVC and BDOL access and locations. In addition, the consulting group advises that King County Elections continue to investigate possible implementation mobile Regional Voting Centers. Various forms of mobile RVCs should be explored, including an RVC “on wheels” to serve neighborhoods or individual voters, and other types of portable RVCs.

¹¹ For detailed analysis of potential costs of ballot drop boxes and locations, please refer to Section 16 in appendix.

Recommended Regional Voting Center and Ballot Drop Box Locations



Appendices

Motion to King County Council: Transition to Vote by Mail	Section 1
Motion to King County Council: Regional Voting Center Consulting Group	Section 2
Formula for determining estimated RVC voter turnout in 2008 Presidential Election	Section 3
King County disability population information	
<i>Department of Services for the Blind clientele</i>	Section 4
<i>Census information</i>	Section 5
Maps	
<i>Transit centers</i>	Section 6
<i>Voter population density</i>	Section 7
Lessons learned	
<i>Geographic placement of early voting centers</i>	Sections 8-9
Larimer County, CO	
Harris County, TX	
Clark County, NV	
<i>BDOL research</i>	Sections 10-12
Legal requirements for Ballot Drop-Off Locations	
Ballot Drop-Off Location Workflow	
Oregon Research	
RVC CG Maps	
<i>BDOLs and RVCs before eliminations</i>	Section 13
Budget and Cost estimates	
<i>RVCs</i>	Sections 14-15
<i>BDOLs</i>	Sections 16
RVC CG meeting Agendas/Minutes	
<i>Agendas</i>	Sections 17-21
<i>Minutes</i>	Sections 22-27